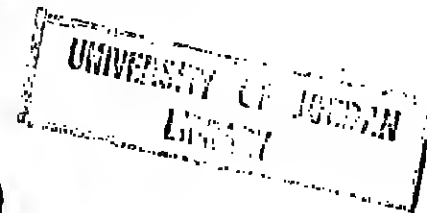


# T.L.S.



## THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FRIDAY • 4 JULY 1980 • No 1032 • 35p



"Interior of the Oude Kerk, Delft, with a seaman in progress", by Emanuel de Witte, 1682; is one of more than 130 Old Master pictures in Christie's auction next Friday, July 11. Immediately afterwards Rubens's "Samson and Delilah" will be offered for sale. The latter painting, which was in the possession of its probable original owner, Nicolaas Rockox of Antwerp, c 1613, was sold in Paris by the Prince of Liechtenstein just 100 years ago, and rediscovered there in 1939.

**The psychology  
of mourning,  
by D. W. Harding**

**Alexander Hamilton  
and the market economy**

**The anatomy of  
depression**

**The American way of sex;  
'The Culture of Narcissism'**

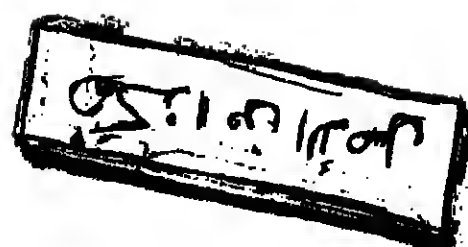
**Ved Mehta's 'Mamaji'**

**Commentary: Piano-rolls  
of the virtuosi;  
Nijinsky—the movie;  
The Wakefield Mysteries**

**The Portuguese revolution  
Should we eliminate TV?  
Great planning disasters**

**Fiction: Kazantzakis,  
Walter Laqueur**

**Jacques Derrida's postcards**











# The modernity of a meritocrat

By Max Beloff

ROBERT MCDONALD:

Alexander Hamilton  
A Biography  
464pp. New York: W. W. Norton.  
\$17.50.  
0 353 01218 2

England and America differ in nothing so much as in their view of history. England has a long history but it is studied as though it were dead and buried with little relevance to the problems of the moment. The "whig" interpretation is all-pervasive. There may be dissidents, the occasional Roman Catholic or Marxist, but by and large there is an accepted version of what happened and no one is concerned to fight old battles over again. The contrast between the friends of William Pitt and the friends of Charles James Fox are not re-enacted by professional historians. In America, with its shorter history, the situation is quite different. No issues seem to have been resolved except American independence itself. Each climax in the nation's fortunes from the making of the Constitution to the "Cold War" is subjected to perpetual argument and re-argument among historians: argument conducted with such evident passion that the plethora of books cannot simply be put down to the academic compulsion on early and frequent publication (the enemy of American, as increasingly of British, scholarship).

Of no period is this truer than that in which the nation was formed. The United States was uniquely fortunate in the calibre of the first generation of its statesmen; and historians derive the benefit of studying an age when a very literate national and even local leadership was impelled, by the lack of a national capital and the own dispersal for most of the years, to engage in discussion through personal letter-writing and the public prints. The materials are very revealing and exceptionally available; many are in print in excellent edited modern editions, for which we in Britain have no equivalent. But study in the American case has not produced consensus: rather the reverse.

In his new book on Alexander Hamilton, Robert McDonald leaves his own explanation of the phenomenon to a brief epilogue. Yet the English reader accustomed to the detachment of our own historians of the late eighteenth century cannot but be struck from the beginning by the heightened tone of both narrative and argument. What is the reader to think of Hamilton and his policies except in terms of Professor McDonald, in a way in which what we now think of Pitt clearly does not worry, say, John Ehrman. Yet Pitt's problems were far finance and of conducting a struggle against an enemy in a deep ideological sympathy at home and not more remote from our concerns than the issues of Washington's America are from those of Jimmy Carter's.

If anything, this reverse is true for England was already undergoing the industrial revolution, while the states of Professor McDonald's case that America was still overwhelmingly agrarian, not merely in its economy but in its whole outlook, with its ready acceptance of the social and political primacy of the landed interest. It is indeed, in his view, the enduring merit of Alexander Hamilton to have dismissed as unworthy of the new nation the economic lethargy and social conservatism which this called for. He has endeavoured through his new economic legislation to have propelled the nation towards a market economy with a political order based upon democratic principles rather than aristocracy.

It is perhaps beyond the scope of a biography to establish to what extent the Hamiltonian programme was responsible for this change which in the South did not take place till after the Civil War. Not all of Hamilton's programme was carried out. The completion of the State debt and the consolidation of the national debt into a permanent stock of capital, together with the creation of a national bank, indeed successfully accomplished.

The writings of Jacques Necker seem to have influenced Hamilton

as much as the English experience, yet by and large he got his "Walpolean" system and defeated the "Bolingbrokean" alternative—the old country party ideology—which was so influential in the Jeffersonian Republican Opposition. But towards the end of his life, Hamilton himself was talking as though the redemption of the national debt might be a desirable objective—a view completely at variance with his original theory of the creation of national capital as Professor McDonald describes it. The idea, set out in his Report on Manufactures, of a positively interventionist economic policy using the genus of tariffs, bounties and subsidized public works to stimulate native industry, was not fully accepted at the time, nor indeed was it accepted as a national policy until the present century and then with somewhat different ideological underpinnings.

My feeling is that Professor McDonald exaggerates the status Hamilton had in fact acquired in the American national myth as this developed in the nineteenth century. He writes:

Partly he got his deserts because most of American history was written by New England Yankees who, except for descendants of John Adams, almost uniformly idolized him. For many decades after the Civil War his niche in the pantheon of American demigods was beneath only Washington's. If indeed it was not at Washington's right hand.

This is not altogether true and I think there are good reasons for a more equivocal attitude, reasons arising from Hamilton's personal character and conduct as well as from the rather uncomfortable realism of his approach to the problems of government. What then are we to make of Professor McDonald's view of why Hamilton has recently been in eclipse? If indeed he has, the argument would have been more difficult to sustain. If Professor McDonald had included a bibliography, one must quote again:

But the American nation reached the peak of its greatness in the middle of the twentieth century: after that time it became increasingly Jeffersonian, governed by coercion and the party spirit, its people progressively more dependent and less self-reliant. Its decline coincided with rhetoric of liberty and equality and justice for all and with that decline Hamilton's fame declined apace.

I find this most perplexing. It is true that for the past two decades the United States has been passing through a difficult period, that it is a more confused, less confident society than it once was. But it is very hard to see how this relates to Jeffersonianism or indeed to a neglect of Hamilton's teachings. If by Jeffersonianism we mean an agrarian social philosophy, the notion is palpable nonsense: agrarian interests may play a disproportionate part in the making of some political decisions, but they do in many other countries; but the United States is first and foremost an industrial nation. If one means the weakening of the centre in favour of the states, this is hardly the case, even if some efforts have been made to stem the drift of power towards the federal government. If Americans are more dependent on government than they were this would represent an anti-Jeffersonian development. It was Hamilton, who as Professor McDonald shows, was influenced by the idea that governmental institutions are safest when personal financial incentives exist for their support. Why should this philosophy be less cogent where workers, or even recipients of "welfare", are concerned than it is in the case of capitalists?

"Party", it is true, is something that Jefferson welcomed and Hamilton deplored. But it has not been only in the past few decades that there has been a dominant factor in American politics; on the contrary, it is the decline of party that some would see as one of the main weaknesses today. I am uncertain what Professor McDonald means by "coercion". It is rather the lack of coercive powers on the part of government which sometimes gives cause for alarm. If what Professor McDonald means is the degree of national interventionism, it is not of social egalitarianism in order to

remedy the past wrongs inflicted upon black Americans, one can only remind him of the fact that, as he himself points out, it was Jefferson who was the slaveholder and Hamilton who was throughout opposed to slavery, the unhappy consequences of which he had observed in the West Indies of his birth and early years. Without the legacy of slavery there would be no need for "affirmative action".

It is not unfair to dwell upon the "epilogue" for it is obvious throughout the book that what has drawn the author to the subject is not a biographical interest in the ordinary sense so much as an interest in Hamilton's ideas and the tactics of their implementation. The most difficult thing to account for where the biographer is concerned is Hamilton's rise to influence in a society as stratified as that of colonial New York. And the author has made his task harder by accepting a birth date for him two years later than the one accepted by Brundage Mitchell, in his well-known biography. I find the precocity this suggests, even in an age when childhood was less prolonged, very hard to take.

Accident no doubt played its part, but Professor McDonald has a less facile answer: for him the secret of Hamilton lies in his inborn determination to achieve "fame", the mark, as he sees it, of the romantic temperament. The idea of a romantic temperament manifested in high ambition and proneness to insupportable enthusiasms—which is held to explain the Marquis de Lafayette—clearly has a fascination for Professor McDonald; like most attempts to classify character it has its obvious weaknesses and I do not find that comparing Hamilton with Byron or Beethoven helps me to understand him any better.

On the question of political tactics, I also find Professor McDonald to be too prone to suggest deep reasons for what may simply represent uncertainty, infirmity of purpose or even hectorism—as in his treatment of Hamilton's minor share in the deliberations of the Constitutional Convention in 1787. But the narrative for the years of the struggle for the Hamiltonian programme is skillful enough, in spite of the complexity of the subject, to hold the reader's full attention. Professor McDonald rightly insists

that in the situation of the United States at the time the past of the future of the Treasury was directly concerned with foreign affairs, at least as much as that of the Secretary of State. And if he wishes to hold Hamilton to our admiration, it is curious that he does not return the compliment to Hamilton's contribution to the making of American foreign policy. For Hamilton grasped the nature of the Anglo-French conflict against the background of the American policy had to be defined and could see the way in which material needs made it impossible to retain neutrality—avoiding Revolutionary gestures—and to that the country was militarily strong enough to defend a neutrality which it professed. It is surely, in carrying a stick which was the essence of Hamilton's doctrine, as it was to be that of a later American hero, the idea of foreign policy can consist only of declarations of principle with the essential weakness of the opposition's case against Hamilton, as of their intellectual desecration today.

Professor McDonald's book is quite considerably to one's understanding of Hamilton, even if it makes Hamilton into one of the ideological and less of a human being. It is a pity that the book has its weaknesses. The argument from English experience, it is odd to find the name George III re-emerging, though nothing has changed.

The prize minister at this time did not always double as chancellor of the exchequer; the reference to a "Greenwich ministry" early in the 1790s is obscure; the great lawyer Mansfield was both the baron and first earl, but to call him First Lord Mansfield suggests some prime ministerial or judicial position which he did not in fact fill. Where France is concerned Professor McDonald is one of the victims of the revolutionary propaganda which Hamilton viewed as his fellow-countryman; the French army which fought in Italy was not ill equipped nor "armed mainly with enthusiasm for liberty". Victory was the greatest of all and there was no actual battle and the French withdrawal was the result of a miracle, but of their general's calculations about the balance of strength.

All historians make mistakes. I think that if I am less than totally enthusiastic about the book it is style rather than content. The virtues of most of the time, Professor McDonald writes a rather formal prose which fits in with the style of the eighteenth century material he is obliged to quote. But occasionally, and jarring, he introduces some modern colloquialism which would have meant nothing to Hamilton or his contemporaries. It suggests an affection for modernity. And Professor McDonald has a weakness for long words—why "conservatism", meaning "conservatism", or "for mideability"?

them wearing the formal clothes they both hated. Combs's own expertise as a pilot comes in useful when he talks of the Wrights' own works; he has also interviewed everyone still alive who knew the brothers, and there are a goodly number of survivors, thank heaven.

Mr. Combs has taken the wise course of confronting the major technical problems that faced the Wrights, and has successfully reduced them to an acceptable standard of simplicity, often by quoting the succinct prose of Wilbur himself, who has a masterly command of the right amount of personal details concerning the brothers and describes their life-style, both well and sympathetically. They finally achieved fame in 1908, and Combs manages to inject a contemporary atmosphere in his description of the incredible, though quite justifiable, enthusiasm let loose on the modest but proud young men from Dayton; and I am glad to see, in the

clubbed one or two illustrations of the Wright brothers, each is often

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Plans for the 1980s include an expansion of the list of scholarly works and textbooks in modern British and European history, and the publication of a completely new *Oxford History of England* under the general editorship of John Roberts. The bulk of the publishing programme will continue to comprise scholarly works, selected for their originality, importance, and intellectual quality, of which some recent examples are:

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A daguerotype, c. 1850, of Combs, the last slave owned in New York State where emancipation was completed in 1827. From Peter J. Parish's *Slavery, the First in a New Series of pamphlets published by the British Association for American Studies* (University of Durham, Elvet Riverside, Durham DH1 3JT).

## Getting off the ground

By C. H. Gibbs-Smith

HARRY E. COMBS with MARTIN CAIDEN

Kill Devil Hill

The Epic of the Wright Brothers

1899-1909

389pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.

0 436 10563 2

The Wright brothers are probably

unique in technological history for the few full-length books which have been written about them. This last one was written by trying to capture the outlandish idea that Orville spent the remaining thirty-six years of his life after Wilbur died of typhoid in 1912, in trying to outpace his brother and to imply that he (Orville) was the one who contributed most to solving the problems of aeroplanes. *Kill Devil Hill* is much more balanced in outlook. Harry E.

Combs is a pilot, and he makes excellent use of numerous and properly full quotations from the Wrights' own works; he has also interviewed everyone still alive who knew the brothers, and there are a goodly number of survivors, thank heaven.

Mr. Combs has taken the wise course of confronting the major technical problems that faced the Wrights, and has successfully reduced them to an acceptable standard of simplicity, often by quoting the succinct prose of Wilbur himself, who has a masterly command of the right amount of personal details concerning the brothers and describes their life-style, both well and sympathetically. They finally achieved fame in 1908, and Combs manages to inject a contemporary atmosphere in his description of the incredible, though quite justifiable, enthusiasm let loose on the modest but proud young men from Dayton; and I am glad to see, in the

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**By Eric Stokes**

**By David Bromwich**

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## The polymetaphorical mailman

**By Christopher Norris**

**JACQUES DERRIDA:**  
La Carte Postale  
De Socrate à l'Étranger et au-delà  
549pp. Paris: Aubier-Flammarion  
2-08 226013 5

This "Death of the Author," so rigorously canvassed in structuralist circles, is the force of the poem's puns and consolations to those who, like Jacques Derrida, are still willing to write and reread the ghostly textual spaces. If writing, as he theorizes, is cut off at source from the illusive "author," then every pun, every subjectivity, then nothing is ever said; can be put down to mere self-expression and language is free to go on holiday, along with all kinds of private and anecdotal baggage. Roland Barthes' novel even writes like a series of fragmentary memoirs under the sign of a language that disowned the speaking subject and offered itself up to the roguish play of the floating, insignificant, and free of the authorial restrictions of conventional literary theory. The first person pronoun is simply (in Jakobson's terms) a "theoretical" shifter, a function of discourse with no more claim to authority than any other form of linguistic address. In the rigor of carnival indulgence where theory rabs shoulders with personal whimsy and language suspends all dealing with truth and its dandied obligations.

huk signifier. Seen as the multitudinous attractions of deconstructive theory. The first person pronoun is simply (in Jakobson's terms) a rhetorical "shifter", a function of discourse with no more claim to authentic truth than any other form of linguistic address. Deconstructive rigour thus gives way to a spirit of carnival indulgence where theory rubs shoulders with personal whimsy and language suspends all dealing with truth and its dangled obligations.

Derrida's objections to this turn of mind on what he sees as the cumulative effect of Lacan's account, between this "privileged signifier" and the concept of truth bound up with epistemic metaphysics of presence. Lacan's "truth" is not the truth. It is yet another variant of the tradition which places voice, presence, and the fullness of meaning—"parole pleine"—before and above writing. The "truth" of Lacan's text is a verities are a welcome home since Derrida speaks elsewhere of women as the disemulating "non-truth of philosophy," which perhaps is the truth of the matter. The feminine but suits his case well enough.<sup>10</sup> The battle-lines are clearly being drawn between deconstruction and the pursuit, Derridian guise and the other main approaches—Freudian and Lacanian—which jostle for supremacy.

That the rivalries involved are not purely theoretical emerges from one of the "letters" which fragments form the first half of the first volume. A rumour had apparently been put about that Derrida had placed himself "under analysis" and the author? Simply that, in Lacan's and his followers' view, such a strategically placed Derrida should be demolished. There is much in these pages to gratify the taste for high-class intellectual gossip on and around the current Parisian scene. They even provide a sublime account of Heidegger's visit to Oxford and Yale (1967-70), which is a little more than a little like Alan Watts, William Miller, Jonathan Culler set down in appropriate reward, like

Oxford, as might be expected. "[D]rawing a quizzical eye on the academic citadels and, in particular, on the school of linguistic philosophy, various spokesmen for which—Austin and Ryle among them—come in for some teasing rejoinders. After Derrida's massively impertinent exchange with John Searle (in the pages of *Graphé*, these reflections offer no great surprise and generally strike the tone of an old-fashioned anthropologist in the field, curiously noting the quaint local customs.

But there is also a recurrent puzzle in the British tradition, from Aristotle to Wittgenstein. As Derrida has written in serious thought, it is the unthought of naming, and of proper names in particular: how to distinguish the "mention" or given reference from the act of giving a proprietary name. The aside of *Pléiade* is a case in point. But what is the puzzle? For Ryle, the burden of the problem is of course very remote from the clarifying aims of British philosophy. For Derrida it is yet another clarifying example of the way in which language constructs a distance from the comforting illusion of subjective self-presence. The mock epistolary form of his text is meant to be a further illustration of the "rays" or communicative detours to which messages are subjected when they enter the circuit of exchange. The puzzle then becomes another, on a deconstructive level, an image of perpetual "discrimination" where the meanings (and identities) are lost in the unending crosswalk of language. As in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, the desire for literary clarity is a desire for metaphors and allusions which conjure up a vast and depersonalized network of circulated messages, addressed by whom, known-when by who-knows-whom. It is wish, so the preference says, to know what the what is, and to know the "message" (from Socrates to Freud).

Apocryphal writings clearly have a place in the literary canon, and usually on the bounds and properties of language. Dorrill offers a serio-comic account of the scholarly debate over the value and authenticity of Plaur's "letters." His polemic is that there, like all other writings, exist in a kind of purely graphical form, and that the only way to establish their origin remains forever undecidable. In the jacket (and frontispiece) of the text is a facsimile of a library postcard, taken from the frontispiece of a thirteenth-century English fortune-telling book, which shows a cartoon-figure Plaur, peering over the shoulder of a Socratorist while writing a letter. The postcard's message is a care in imitating the postcard naturally launched: Henceforth, when dignified history is

Western metaphysics begins with Plato and the "repressed problematics" of writing. It offers a emblem of the way in which false, paranoias and crazy misattributions can open up the history of culture to a reading freed from the constraints of "metaphysical" nihilistic.

Derride—again like Pynchon—seems to have two alternate, or opposite images of "the post": "the one [hand] is the system, the legalized channels of regular exchange wherein messages are sent" under proper signature to their proper recipients. The other two, however, are the same self-enforcing laws as guarantee the "urgency" of the speaking subject, the rule of universal meaning, the "historical economy" of language in use. At this point of view the postal "epoch" is that which likewise determines in the literary sphere, the reign of the Author as sovereign dispenser of messages. But this is the threshold moment of the post when messages are released without authority or fixed destination, where origin fades from sight and one is left with a floating circulation of texts "from Socrates to Freud and beyond."

It is thus that the partial metaphors are carried forward into the essays on Freud and Lacan. "The Performed Letter" takes on the added "supplement" of meaning and advances Derrida's case, against Lacan, that "en France la psychanalyse n'avait pas posé la question du texte." The re-communicative image, under all disguises, becomes the latest in a series of deconstructive plays in which Derrida has sought to d

to debase the metaphysics of these or-  
 "To hesitate, to tamperless,  
 to defer and to differ "the  
 vagaries of the past take on all the  
 attributes of a *différance*.

A history of the topic would pro-  
 in question "the very possibility of  
 history, of historical concepts, of  
 tradition, of its haunting-down and  
 local interruptions . . . And what  
 could such a history  
 like than that  
 sequence, disclaiming authority at  
 every turn ("hence the frequent  
 use of false citations in my work")  
 and claiming nothing less than the  
 encyclopedic status? "L'effet de  
 la lettre, la genèse of representation  
 in relation, the sublimation of  
 enigmatic couplings and relations  
 ships, from Socrates/Plato to the  
 Freudian topology of Primary and  
 Secondary Processes. ("Le second-  
 aira est *Pavlov* supplémentaire.")  
 Literature, philology and psycho-  
 analysis, the pillars of postmodern  
 meaning—*ex*posed, all too  
 delirious and random destinations of  
 a mischievous mall. The humble  
 poscud that becomes an emblem  
 of pure, utopian textuality: a mus-  
 eum without permanence or serious  
 intent, no object of happy specula-  
 tion.

Derrida has turned himself into a sort of pretext for some brilliant and wholly irresponsible polemical and satirical games. Like Bertie, he has pushed well beyond the point where his ideas could be picked up and made into a method by earnest disciples. In *Carte postale* he offers himself as a kind of Manipulian saint, the only person in the post office defying all the rules of literary genre and hurling ridicule at his own expense. The *philosophes* and *glorians*—target of many such satirical critiques—is clearly a misreading. Derrida is anxious to establish that he is not a philosopher, but a virtuous enough deconstructionist forced, to elude the deconstructionist pack at his heels.

**La Carta postal** sets out to resist classification and certainly succeeds

beside the point. Two long cases—on French and Italian—make

Derrida's previous interests. "Specular—sur Freud" is a deconstructive reading of the tropes and metaphors by which Freud expresses (and—as Derrida would have it—unwittingly dismantles) his

assentialist understanding of the  
psychic economy. Derrida's familiar  
"graphique du supplément" once  
again plays the major deconstructive  
role in showing how language  
means back against its own privileged  
outcrops and sets in motion a  
kind of textual unweaving where-  
by such justified concerns are  
critically told here. The upshot is  
to demonstrate that Freud's ex-  
planations always leak out, beyond the  
biological matrix, as a "texture  
of willing" where sexual drives are  
harnessed in a purely technical  
economy of displaced meaning. The  
Pleasure Principle, and other such  
concepts, are shown to be  
a language of Derrida's *differance*.

enough). The battle-lines are clearly being drawn between deconstruction in its post-structuralist guise and the other main approaches—Foucaultian and Marxist—which jostle for supremacy.

That the rivalries involved are not purely theoretical emerges from one of the "letters" which fragments form the first half of this volume. A running gag appears to be just about that Derrida has placed himself "under analysis". And the motto? Simply that, for Lacan and his followers, it must seem strategically vital that Derrida should be enigmatised. There is no need to state the obvious: the case for high-class intellectual gossip can and around the current Paris scene. They even provide a vibrant portrait of Herridge's visits to Oxford and Yale (1977-78), with various names and places mentioned in passing. This Miller, Jonathan Culler set down in unflattering regard, he

Apocryphal writings clearly have a place in the literary canon, and usually on the bounds and properties of language. Dorrill offers a serio-comic account of the scholarly debate over the value and authenticity of Plaut's "letters." His polemic is that there, like all other writings, exist in a kind of purely graphical form, and that the only way to establish their origin remains forever undecidable. In the jacket (and frontispiece) of the text is a facsimile of a library postcard, taken from the frontispiece of a thirteenth-century English fortune-telling book, which shows a cartoon-figure Plaut, peering over the shoulder of a Socrates who is writing a letter. The postcard's message is a care in spelling. The postcard naturally lauded: Dorrill's rhyle, which digramatic history o-

between the definition chosen on the examples selected to illustrate it—sets Harari's introduction a odds with the book.

**MARBARA JOHNSON:**  
*Deformation du langage poétique*  
 213pp. Paris: Flammarion.  
 0 2 08 211512 7.

The prose poems of Huendolre and  
 Malraux have now been well served  
 by their critics. The authors, music-  
 ian and poet, are well known, and  
 those approaches, but critics have  
 not risen to the occasion. The  
 interpretations have never succeeded  
 in making much sense of the entire  
 prose itself.

Barbara Johnson's *Disfigurement* in language precisely shows that play criticism can rise to the occasion. She reads Pound's *the person* as a poem that is "a brilliant commentary on one has prized over, exploring their relation to the poems of *Le Fleuve du Mal* and showing what and how the "mise en prose," "the raising in question" of Pound's "realism" and poetic procedures, the prose poem explore the difference between poetic and run-poetic language but a difference within poetic language is a space of irony or self-consciousness. The "mise en prose" is "the same run."

This understanding of the project emerges from a series of varied and powerful readings, attentive to the narrative expansion of an idea.

taken literally in the play was quotations or commonplace from contemporary moralizing literature and especially to the foreground of poetic figures. While *Les Fies du malin* derives much of its power from the same resources as *Le malin* (*ciel/orof: bien/moi, ciel/duviation, spleen/duviation*), the oxymoronic unification (cf. "horre sympathique", "sibline imitio", "fangeuse grmleur") in *Le malin* has proems have various ways of rendering unky bility problematicum. Comporing "Le Chevelme" with *Le malin* vorvinn, "Un. hemisphre dno uno chevelmo". Johnst

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Mullariné appears only in the last quarter of the book. Interpretation of his comments on *travaux poétiques* shows in what way he succeeded. Boudelaire, and a reading of the *Œuvres complètes* of the poet, present analogies to deal with the various questions of the force and significance of signifier. Against critics who have found in this text a "Mullarinéan art poétique," Johnson directly argues that what the text really says is that "le poète n'est pas le révélateur d'un genre de l'écriture." "L'écriture d'un genre de l'écriture" is not only a contradiction, but it is also a signifier.

The critical gifts Johnman brings to the novel are an unusual power of abstraction and a willingness to follow the implications of his ideas, strategies, and a striking inventiveness in the exploitation of verbal connections. Unfortunately, her interest in the subversiveness of the novel leads her to slight much of the *Plot* and the *Style*. She accepts too readily a reading of the poems that amorphous unity, correspondence, metaphorical fusion, and neglect their powerful, ironic consequences. This indulgent, hazy, and over-idealized critical strategy and actually contributes to the interest of *Deffernance* in that it forgoes poétique, whose inventive rigour makes it one of the most exciting books on nineteenth-century literature to have been unearthed in recent years.

## The semioclasm to come

**By Simon Loveday**

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**JOSUE V. HARARI (Editor) :**

**Textual Strategies**  
**Perspectives in Post-Structuralist**  
**Criticism**

475pp. Methuen, £11.95 (paperback,  
£4.95).

0 416 73740 4

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"Precisely because structuralism and its later much constituted and unified theory, is a complex network of writings interacting in various ways, it is extremely difficult to map and to interpret them", writes Jonathan Culler in the first article in Josue Harari's recent volume. Josue V. Harari's book addresses itself. Where it leads, and at the risk of over-simplifying, the reviewer must follow.

The origins of structuralism lie in the linguistics of Saussure and the self-contained and "idealist" (as opposed to "materialist") communication theory for which he proposed the name of semiology. Harari's structuralism is firmly of the Saussurean, "idealist" kind. And the founding father of what he calls post-structuralism is Derrida, originator of a move from semiology to "semantics", or the subversion of signs. By no defining post-structuralism Harari makes it into a more self-contained idealist system, one characterized by an "idealist" text.

**Textual Strategies** consists of fifteen recent articles by French or French-influenced critics, accompanied by an editor's introduction of useful intellectual biographies of the contributors, and a twenty-page bibliography of relevant writings in criticism and related subjects, including an annotated survey of the major critical periods in the field. As we would expect, there is a contribution from Derrida himself. The bulk of the remaining fourteen articles can be divided into two groups. The first, although Harari does not set it out like two groups, is the first group of fairly standard structuralist pieces—using linguistic analogies to assert the importance of the reader, stressing a process of plurality, and the second group, also of six articles, though in a very different manner, concerned to place under the Derridian sign where Harari would like to put them. Rather they share a tendency to ground their analyses of literary texts in outside, "grounded" in psychoanalytic (Lévi-Strauss), literary (Benjamin, Donato, Engeström, Vance, perhaps Edward Said), or political (Michel Serres, Louis Marin) a tendency, that is, to move from text to context.

Derrida's criticism, however, certainly not contextual, but textual and centripetal. Grounded in the text, and the text in the text, those six articles do. Is post-structuralism only in the text? It goes beyond structuralism and has its split. And the conclusion

between the definition chosen on the examples selected to illustrate it—sets Harari's introduction at odds with the book.

This disavowance can only be re-  
solved by returning to the science  
which has all along provided  
model for structuralism, namely  
linguistics. Is there any room for  
in post-structuralism in linguistics?  
It seems to me that there is. In  
the case of deconstruction, linguis-  
tics is the study of the context  
of language, of the neglected social  
aspect of Saussure's semiology.  
This moves from utterance to dis-  
course, from language as system  
to language as action, represents  
the difference between the structural  
(through it in way a refutation of  
his findings): it is, to return to the  
terms used earlier, "materialist",  
rather than "idealist". And this is  
surely what is happening in struc-  
turalism, and in post-structuralism.  
The line of descent of post-  
structuralism runs, not through  
Derrida, but through Pierrucci,  
Macherey, Lucien Goldmann, and  
(ultimately) Mikhail Bakhtin, and  
it exists, not within, but beyond

This anthology rather falls between two stools. To the specialist, much of the material will be familiar—though attention must be made of two excellent articles, by Nori Hertz (on Freud) and Roger Girard (on A *Nachtsmerger* Night Dream), which appear in print for the first time. As an introduction for the uninitiated reader, it suffers from the terminology of ambivalence that is influential.

and how the "mise en prose" is "remise en question". "Foregrounding" various poetic tropes

dures, the prose poems exploit the difference between poetic and non-poetic language but a difference within poetic language itself. The "poetic" is not a solace, a nest. The "mise en prose" is "mise à nu".

This understanding of the prose emerges from a series of varied and powerful readings, attentive to a narrative expansion of an idea taken literally, in the play with the "poetic" and the "prose" in contemporary moralizing literature, but especially to the foregrounding of poetic figures. While *Les Fleurs du Mal* derives some of its power from the constant reverts to puns, the *Châliel* poem, "L'Éducation spirituelle", is a "dysnomie", "spéculatif", "l'oxydation", "unofficial" (cf. "horreur sympathique", "sublime minilo", "fangeux gneur" (1. 1)). The prose poems have various ways of rendering unity itself problematic. The "poetic" is not a solace, a nest, a prose vorrin. "Un déshéparé dans un chévroir". (Johns)

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connections. Unfortunately, her interest in the subversiveness of the prose poems lends her to slight that of the *Fleurs du Mal* themselves. She accepts too readily a reading of

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